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Voluntary Public

Date: 9/13/2017

GAIN Report Number: ET1716

Ethiopia

Post: Addis Ababa

Too Early to Assess Crop Damage from Fall Armyworm

Report Categories:

Grain and Feed

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Report Highlights:

After making its initial landfall in Ethiopia earlier this year, the fall armyworm (FAW) – a crop-eating pest – has quickly spread through the maize-producing regions of the country where it has infested almost 685,000 hectares. The extent of the damage is currently considered to be relatively minor due to various interventions and rainy weather conditions. There is speculation, however, that once the rain stops and crops dry out, the pest could reemerge and cause greater crop damage, but at this point it's too early to tell.

Fall Armyworm Spreads, Affecting Mostly Maize:

In February of this year, the first case of Fall Armyworm (FAW) – a crop-eating pest – was reported in the southwestern part of Ethiopia after initially making its way to the continent back in 2016. Since arriving in Ethiopia, the pest has spread to the maize-producing areas in parts of the western half of the country where, according to the FAO's September 4 update, it has infested almost 685,000 hectares or about 23 percent of the total area in the country planted in maize. Post estimated last year's (MY16/17) maize production at [6.5 million metric tons](#).

In addition to maize, the pest has also been found on sorghum, potatoes, and teff being grown in different parts of Ethiopia, but the level of infestation is reported as negligible. Based on the experiences of other neighboring African countries, the FAW could also impact other important crops such as wheat, millet, vegetables, forage, cotton and sugar cane. At present, there are no known reports of FAW affecting coffee production.

Too Early to Assess FAW Impact on 17/18 Crop Production:

At this point, the extent of the FAW-related crop damage to maize and other crops is considered to be relatively minor due to various interventions, such as the application of pesticides and the manual removal of worms. The rainy weather, which is expected to continue until the end of September, is also believed to have a suppressing effect on the spread and intensity of the pest. There is speculation that once the rain stops and crops dry out, the pest could reemerge and cause greater crop damage. However, it's still too early to estimate the potential crop damage that could occur in the coming weeks, but it is clear that any FAW-related losses will only compound the country's food insecurity situation.

Government & Partners Respond:

To deal with the situation, the government has set up a FAW technical team to coordinate the national response, which among other things has included surveys to assess the situation, workshops to familiarize farmers with appropriate pest mitigation techniques, and the allocation of resources to procure needed pesticides. In the meantime, FAO is leading the larger international effort, with contributions from USAID and USDA.